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Stansfield Turner, Director
CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Headquarters Building
Washington, D.C. 20505

21 September 1977

Dear Admiral:

While assembling material for a lecture in my course, Nuclear Deterrence, at the Naval War College, I remembered your Question and Answer interview with U.S. News and World Report on 16 May, which prompts this letter.

I think that the full implications of several valid points you make in this interview provide the basis for a sombre assessment of the nature of the Soviet challenge and the purpose of her expansion of both theater and strategic forces. You remark that ". . . Their weaknesses are in economics and politics. . . Our lead is so great that they cannot hope to overtake us" and ". . . their ideology is hamstringing them in many ways. After all, what's left of pure Marxism? Where is it practiced or believed in? . . . So-no, I don't believe that the Soviets are in the ascendancy ideologically." And finally ". . . they are trying to convert military power into political advantage. They have no other strengths that they can export. . . Military is all that they have."

Twenty-five years ago, an eminent critic of socialism and a favorite scholar of mine, Ludwig von Mises, remarked about Russian Marxists:

> ". . . Then some of these students of economic policies and statistics began to suspect that the standard of living of the masses is much higher in the capitalist countries than in their own country. How can this be? Why are conditions so much more propitious in the United States which--although foremost in capitalist production--is most backward in awakening class consciousness in the proletariat? The inference from these facts seems inescapable. If the advanced countries do not adopt communism and fare rather well under capitalism. If communism is limited to a country which Marx considered as backward and does not bring riches for all, is not the correct interpretation that communism is a feature of backward countries and results in general poverty? Must not a Russian patriot be ashamed of the fact that his country is committed to this system? Such thoughts are very dangerous in a despotic country. . . But even unspoken, they are on the tip of every intelligent man's tongue. This is the real crisis of Russian Marxism. Every day that passes without bringing the world revolution aggravates it. The Soviets must conquer the world or else they are menaced in their own country by a defection of the intelligentsia. It is concern about the ideological state of Russia's shrewdest minds that pushes Stalin's Russia to unflinching aggression."

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Isn't this the nub of our concern about Soviet objectives and their potential for choosing a violent "final solution" to their losing struggle with capitalism? Certainly their friends can pick up Angolas and Ethiopias and other feudal or primitive states, just as they took control in Russia or Mao in China. But this is not the Marxist flowering of socialism from the collapse of a well-developed, but "inwardly rotten", capitalist order. After this opportunism runs out of gas, as it must, and world attention begins to focus on the practical failure of the bankrupt communist social philosophy, what next? How might Soviet leaders deal with the inevitable?

Marxists explain their poor performance by complaining that by coming to power in agricultural Russia, they had to "leap over" one of the historically necessary stages in the transition to socialism--the full development of capitalism and the workers expropriation of the capitalist exploiters. This opportunism might have been a strategic mistake. More importantly, communist countries have been forced to defend themselves against capitalist attack which has diverted their energies into war production instead of the peaceful building of socialism. Thus, communism has not failed so much as it has not yet been tried! The unchallenged control of the capital, resources, and skilled people in Eurasia and Africa, the elimination of all opposing military power, and the neutralization of the United States, would provide the right preconditions for building a "New Communism" on correct Marxist premises.

President Carter's willingness to engage the Soviet leaders on the issue of human rights is long overdue. But it is essential to broaden this issue and not only focus on the plights of individuals. Nor is it helpful to confuse communist dictatorships and the global pretensions of their movement with local authoritarian regimes. This softens the sting of our opposition to our major enemy and smacks of timidity. The essential issue is this. Do market economy, private ownership of the means of production, and democratic political institutions provide the better opportunity to mankind than command economy, state ownership of the means of production, and one-party rule by force? There is no doubt that we have the better of this argument against the international socialist movement and we must join this battle of ideas that has been thrust upon us. In the end, this battle is decisive, and the communist ideologues are well aware of this.

However, as we undercut the communist philosophy, highlight its manifest weakness and practical failure, and steadfastly represent our own best values, we shake the foundations of communist legitimacy and power. Will Soviet leaders be tempted to strike back militarily to eliminate our ultimately fatal threat? Or will they accept our arguments, turn inward, moderate their program of forcing socialist transitions wherever they can, and strive to build a communism with a human face? This is their dilemma. Clearly we must encourage the Soviet leaders to travel a liberalizing, reformist path. But we also must ensure this by maintaining an unquestioned ability to deny them a "final solution" through war. Although military strategy is not your direct responsibility, I would like to draw some of the corollaries to this assessment.

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First, it is nonsensical for us to speak of "delaying the economic recovery of the Soviet Union" or of "assuredly destroying" industry or population. We must attend to our own society and recovery. We do not have a unilateral advantage in countervalue destruction. If the Soviet leaders should decide to seek a military solution to the problem of capitalism, then they must strike first against all the NATO military power with the aim of winning an overwhelming tactical superiority in Eurasia and a clear strategic superiority against the U.S. Only two outcomes are possible. If the Soviet disarming attack is successful in severely crippling our strategic capabilities and tactical air and naval forces in Europe, relative to Soviet reserved military power, then any countervalue retaliation on our part would be suicidal. They could easily do unto us what we can do unto them. Furthermore, their control of economic assets in Europe and Japan can compensate for any deliberate civilian damage we might inflict on the Soviet homeland. Are we prepared to attack Europe and Japan as well in order to retard Soviet recovery? Neither the President nor his succesors will have the stomach to engage in purposeless and futile destruction, nor should they. The possible existence of an effective Soviet civil defense only strengthens this conclusion.

On the other hand, if our forces are able to counterattack and only roughly even-up the post-attack balance of military power, then Soviet leaders will be in no position to dictate peace terms. In this case, it is unnecessary to initiate countervalue attacks. Thus, there is no reason to contemplate and prepare for the deliberate, extensive destruction of Soviet society. The essence of the strategic rivalry is the relative balance of countermilitary power. Can we convince the Soviet leaders that the U.S. and NATO can absorb their disarming strike and counterattack their political and military command and instruments of war in sufficient strength to deny them an overwhelming military superiority that is under effective control? This is the only meaningful test of the deterrent power of NATO military forces. All talk of assured countervalue retaliation of whatever type is irrelevant, obviously lacks credibility, and fails to meet the main problem. If the Soviet leaders can effectively disarm the West, then they will be in good position to enforce their political will.

Second, from the very beginning, our deterrent strategy vis a vis the Soviet Union has failed to distinguish betweeen the communist parties in power and the military and police forces on which they depend, from the great body of people under their control. Our declared threats to "massively retaliate against", "assuredly destroy", and "prevent the early recovery of" communist states have been extensively quoted and communicated to their subjects by communist leaders both to prove our bad intentions and to reinforce the idea that, in the event of war, these people have no alternative but to support the ruling communist party. Certainly we should be suspicious of a policy that effectively arms the psywar efforts of our opponents! Given the choice between Stalin and the murderous brutality of advancing Nazi troops, defecting Ukrainians and others understandandably chose Stalin. But we should not emulate Nazi stupidity. Instead, U.S. declaratory policy, force capabilities, and

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force employment doctrine especially, must show the communist camp that if they initiate war, then we will discriminately destroy their military and police power, unseat the ruling parties, and restore the captive nations to their people. This policy is both humane and supremely practical since it exploits the split between the rulers and the ruled and encourages the subject peoples to fight with us on their own behalf. It is also a wartime policy that the President and allied leaders credibly can pursue without reservation. Indeed, communist leaders quite properly belive this to be our goal and the ultimate threat to overcome.

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In sum, our political strategy should emphasize that, if communist leaders choose war, then we will exploit this situation to liberate communist-controlled populations everywhere. We need only deny Soviet conquest. She must sieze and positively control target countries. We can exploit the tenuous allegiance of her subject populations and her military forces and deny the Soviet leaders the staying power they need to consolidate their prospective gains. Our military strategy should aim at the selective, discriminate destruction of communist military power in-being and its control. Communist populations should know that they, their cultural treasures, and their hard-earned economic assets will not be the direct objects of U.S. attack. Instead, their wartime defection, sabotage, or passive resistance will help the U.S. to rid their countries of communist dictation once and for all. Let communist subjects be alert to a wartime opportunity to regain control of their lives and have the hope of salvaging some good from unprecedented catastrophe should their rulers choose war. This should be a continuing theme in our public diplomacy. Measured against the inoffensive nature of U.S. public diplomacy, such a line seems harsh and mean-spirited. But measured against the routine assertions of communist officials, it is mild and realistic. In any case, we have a duty to direct the world's attention toward the greatest potential danger of our time--the "crisis of communism."

The characteriatics of our military forces that are urgently required for retaliatory counterforce operations are a separate subject. On this score, our present course leaves much to be desired, but this letter is already too long.

Thank you for your attention. Perhaps you should be more careful about granting interviews.

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Yours truly,

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D/ Executive Secretary

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